Opposition agrees: No support of Ford; Leaders wouldn't support Progressive Conservative minority government led by current premier

The Toronto Star

January 26, 2022 Wednesday

Copyright 2022 Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. A8

Length: 558 words

Byline: Robert Benzie Queen's Park Bureau Chief

Body

No Progressive Conservative majority, no more Premier Doug Ford.

With an election 18 weeks away, that was the message from Ontario's three opposition party leaders at a Ryerson University Democracy Forum event Tuesday moderated by the Star's Martin Regg Cohn.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath, Liberal Leader Steven Del Duca and Green Leader Mike Schreiner emphasized they would not prop up a Tory minority government led by Ford.

That suggests the premier's party, which won 76 seats in 2018, must again win a majority of seats in the 124-member legislature on June 2 for him to remain on the job.

Public opinion polls currently indicate a Conservative minority is a likely outcome of the election. The 338Canada polling simulator suggests the Tories would win 59 seats, the Liberals 34, the NDP 30 and the Greens one if the election was held today.

Horwath, whose party now has 40 seats in the house, did not mince words when asked by Cohn about what happens if Ford's Tories fall short of a majority.

"I don't see any scenario where I would support a Doug Ford government," she said firmly on the webinar attended by more than 1,000 people.

"I just don't have a lot of respect for what he has done in Ontario."

Emphasizing that Ontarians "want to get off the roller-coaster ride" of the past four years, Horwath expressed a willingness to work with other party leaders to topple Ford.

"If Steven Del Duca is prepared to support the kind of things that we want to see happen to fix what's wrong in Ontario then I would welcome that and I would be prepared to have that conversation," she said.

Horwath conceded "that if it's a matter of working on the things that Ontarians want to see fixed and work on those solutions ... then absolutely I'm prepared to do that work and hope he is" too.

"But I think the voters have a huge decision to make," said the NDP leader, who will be contesting her fourth election at the party's helm since 2009.

Del Duca, for his part, told Cohn the Liberals also could not back a Ford-led PC minority.

"I don't believe that I'll be able to support Doug Ford," he said, noting the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored how much Ontarians would like their politicians to work together.

"What people want to see in this province is leaders confident enough to work across party lines," said Del Duca, whose party was reduced to seven seats in 2018 after governing Ontario for nearly 15 years.

"Having said that, Doug Ford has demonstrated consistently ... he's not the right person for the job. He doesn't have what it takes - not the capacity, the curiosity, the interest or the skill set to get us through to the recovery and rebuild this province," he said.

Schreiner, who holds his party's only seat, said he "just can't support Doug Ford as premier" given the past four years.

"I've never seen a premier so systemically dismantle environmental protections, completely take us backwards on climate action, and just be missing in action when it comes to so many important issues like housing affordability and shoring up our health-care system," said the Green leader.

"So, no, I wouldn't be able to support Mr. Ford," he said, adding he would be willing to "collaborate and co-operate" with Horwath and Del Duca in a minority legislature.

"I absolutely always put people first, ahead of partisan politics. That's what the people of Ontario want."

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Journal Code: TTA

Subject: TYPES OF GOVERNMENT (92%); DEMOCRACIES (90%); POLITICAL PARTIES (90%); POLITICS (90%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (78%); ELECTIONS & POLITICS (78%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (78%); POLLS & SURVEYS (76%); VOTERS & VOTING (76%); COVID CORONAVIRUS (60%); COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS (60%); INFECTIOUS DISEASE (60%); EPIDEMICS (50%)

Geographic: ONTARIO, CANADA (94%); CANADA (93%)

Load-Date: January 26, 2022

End of Document